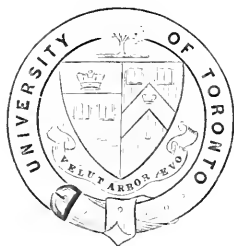


LECTURES  
ON  
THE HOLY SACRAMENT  
OF  
THE LORD'S SUPPER,  
BY  
THE REV. R. L. COTTON, D.D.,  
PROVOST OF WORCESTER COLLEGE, OXFORD.



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## LECTURE XVII.

UNITY AND LOVE PROMOTED BY THE COMMUNION.

1 CORINTHIANS, x. 17.

*“For we being many are one bread, and one body: for we are all partakers of that one bread.”*

AMONG the numerous important objects of the holy Communion shines eminently and conspicuously that of promoting the spirit of union and love among Christians. The importance of the tendency of this sacred ordinance to the furtherance of such an end, appears both in the urgent need existing for cherishing peace and charity in the Church of Christ, and in the powerful agency operating in the course of the celebration of the Lord's Supper towards the accomplishment of its claims. Though the social spirit is an integral part of the moral constitution of man as it came from the hands of our gracious Creator, the corruption of our nature has so damaged and defaced

it, that its efficiency is ruined and its beauty destroyed. And the natural man now is given to selfishness and disposed to enmity, to an isolated pursuit of his own peculiar interests, and to many forms of uncharitable temper towards his neighbour. An ungenerous narrow-mindedness draws a circle around himself, or himself and his family, or himself and his party. And all beyond this confined sphere are considered by him as out of the reach of his sympathy, if not regarded with dislike, enmity, and contempt. The heart too, thus destitute of love, is ever ready to be instigated by passing circumstances to envy, or jealousy, or hatred, or vindictiveness. Fearful is the amount of evil issuing from this fount of corruption. The acts of injustice, the mischievous language, the dissensions, divisions, hostilities, derived from it in this life are endless in their extent, as they are pernicious and ruinous in their nature. And in the life to come, it may be expected that the spirit of enmity permitted to remain in the soul and gain strength here upon earth, will rage with infinite aggravation and become one of the chief sources of distracting torment to the malignant beings in hell.

On the other hand, "love is the fulfilling of the law."<sup>a</sup> It urges us to all goodness, to every branch of justice, to every species of benevolence. It moves us to every social duty toward our immediate family and household, toward our relatives in their respective distances, toward our friends, toward our country, toward the church, toward the whole human race. It generates forgiveness, for-

<sup>a</sup> Romans, xiii. 10.

bearance, meekness, gentleness, peaceableness, sympathy, tenderness, and considerate regard to the reputation and to the spiritual and temporal interests of our neighbour, to hopeful and favouring judgment of his character, generosity, in a word, to every social grace. And it trains the soul for heaven. "Charity never faileth."<sup>b</sup> It is a perennial and eternal stream. Taking its rise in this life from the inspiration of the Holy Spirit in the soul, it spreads its soothing and healthgiving waters over it in ever increasing extent, and sends forth peaceful and beneficial language, and generous and noble actions, and passing into the eternal life to come, it expands into a fathomless ocean of love, filling its blessed possessor with unspeakable happiness, enabling him to make the felicity of countless glorified beings his own, as he "rejoices with them that rejoice,"<sup>c</sup> and causing him to enjoy the sweet feeling of love in matured yet ever advancing extent through everlasting ages.

Most grateful then may we feel to our blessed Lord for crowning His many precepts on this great subject with the institution of an Ordinance replete with correctives of the selfish, uncharitable spirit, and in many ways calculated to excite and cherish the gracious spirit of sympathy, peace, and love.

The Lord's Supper tends powerfully to the purification of the soul from enmity, and the furtherance of its advance in love, both in a negative and positive direction. Negatively, it repels all that opposes unity and harmony. In accordance with the in-

<sup>b</sup> 1 Corinthians, xiii. 8.

<sup>c</sup> Romans, xii. 15.

junctions of our blessed Saviour regarding the spirit in which the ordinances of the law should be attended, all who harbour feelings of variance toward their neighbour are forbidden to approach the holy table. "Therefore if thou bring thy gift to the altar, and there rememberest that thy brother hath ought against thee ; leave there thy gift before the altar, and go thy way ; first be reconciled to thy brother, and then come and offer thy gift."<sup>d</sup> In harmony with this admonition of Christ, the church gives her counsel. "And if ye shall perceive your offences to be such as are not only against God, but against your neighbours, then ye shall reconcile yourselves unto them ; being ready to make restitution and satisfaction, according to the uttermost of your power for all injuries and wrongs done by you to any other, and being likewise ready to forgive others that have offended you as you would have forgiveness of your offences at God's hand."<sup>e</sup> The impulse of so urgent an occasion as that of partaking of the Lord's Supper, the consideration of losing its numerous and vast comforts and benefits by abstaining from it, and still more of incurring the displeasure of God and fearful damage to the soul by carrying to the Lord's table a spirit of variance in any of its deformed phases, tends powerfully to excite an energetic endeavour to banish every uncharitable feeling from the soul, and resuscitate in it the gracious temper of brotherly love. There may be a recognition of the duty of relinquishing dissension and returning to peace hanging

<sup>d</sup> St. Matthew, v. 23, 24.

<sup>e</sup> Communion Service.

over the soul. But the reluctance of the natural heart to struggle vigorously against its corrupt feelings, and especially to do any thing which appears humiliating, such as making an acknowledgment of error, or an apology for an offence, which must so often be comprehended in reconciliation, keeps it back from the discharge of this important duty. And thus the variance continues. And the breach becomes wider. And scope is opened for additional and aggravating offences. And the hope of restoration of amity becomes fainter, as the duration of the variance is protracted. Most valuable then is that occasion for an urgent effort in the soul to divest itself of its reluctance to an important duty contravening its natural feelings, and to rouse itself to its faithful and prompt discharge, found in the celebration of the Lord's Supper. An approaching Eucharist is announced. An habitual attendant at the holy table calls to mind a dissension which he has had with his neighbour. He feels that it is his imperious duty, in obedience to the command of his Lord and Saviour, to partake of the sacred feast. He has often experienced in it great comfort, and derived from it inestimable benefit to his soul. He considers that his absence from the holy Table would be an evil example to his neighbourhood, a source of pain to devout communicants, and, above all, a dishonour to his Lord. He cannot, therefore, endure the thought of abandoning the holy Sacrament. Yet he feels that he must not venture to attend it, while at variance with his neighbour. Amidst contending feelings then he plainly sees that reluctance to humble himself in seeking reconcilia-

tion with his brother is that which ought to give way. He resolves, therefore, upon a strenuous effort to that effect. He prays for pardon for whatever fault may lie to his charge in the rupture which had occurred, for grace to give him strength for a difficult duty, and wisdom to direct him in the discharge of it. He then summons his energies for it, goes to his offending or offended neighbour, and makes peace with him.

By repelling those who live in sin or hold any heretical doctrines, the Church removes all real ground of disunion from communicants. The Christian heart, delighting in holiness and abominating iniquity, deeply impressed with the importance of "the truth as it is in Jesus,"<sup>f</sup> and recoiling from all perversion of it, cannot feel in harmony with those who live in immoral ways or harbour false doctrine. The admission then of such offenders or heretics to the Table of the Lord might greatly distract the worthy orthodox communicant. It might perplex him with conflicting scruples, and prevent that free and copious flow of Christian and brotherly love in his soul, which is one of the most abundant sources of his comfort in the celebration of the Lord's Supper. A great impediment, then, to the unrestrained course of charitable feeling in communion is removed by the banishment of offenders either in doctrine or practice from the Lord's Table.

Thus every guest at the sacramental feast, having discharged from his own heart all vindictive, un-

<sup>f</sup> Ephesians, iv. 21.

kind, inimical feelings, all variance, hostility, enmity of every sort, may look round upon those assembled with him at the sacred banquet, and, trusting that they also have purified themselves from all uncharitableness, together with all that is false in doctrine or corrupt in practice, may feel united with them in one bond of Christian love.

*Positively*, by admonition, by practical exercise of charity, by prayer, by various other elements in the celebration of the holy Eucharist, the Church urges and cherishes unity, love, and peace.

Her healthful admonitions cannot be too often repeated, "Be in perfect charity with all men,"<sup>g</sup> "ye that do truly and earnestly repent you of your sins, and are in love and charity with your neighbours, and intend to lead a new life, following the commandments of God, and walking from henceforth in His holy ways, draw near with faith and take this holy Sacrament to your comfort."

Her practical means of cherishing love we find in the Offertory. She makes us practise charity, as it were, in her presence. She lays before us the Word of God, urging deeds of love by various modes of forcible and influential precepts, and calls us to act upon them at the moment under her own eye. And blessed are they whose hearts God touches by His grace, rendering them susceptible of the impressions purposed by His Word, and causing them really to feel compassion for the poor, and to make an effort of generosity and love in giving according to their ability in their behalf.

But conscious of the inadequacy of the utmost extent of human power to meet the spiritual and temporal necessities of man, the Church leads us to exercise charitable sympathy with every member of the Church in all parts of the world by seeking in prayer the supply of all their varied needs from the inexhaustible treasury of all good, the unfathomable love and boundless power of Almighty God. Such prayer seems to throw down the confining walls of narrow-minded selfishness, and to urge the heart to expatiate in its charitable sympathy far and wide over the world. And the Church leads us not only to "weep with them that weep,"<sup>h</sup> but also to "rejoice with them that do rejoice," elevating our mind to the regions of the blessed, and directing us to rejoice in their joy, and pour out the grateful and benevolent effusions of our love in thanksgiving for it to the redeeming God.

But as we approach the sacramental act itself, we find the union of Christians in its closest degree set forth in the most powerful figures; "For we being many, are one bread and one body." The insertion of the conjunction in our translation tends in some measure to weaken the force of this passage.<sup>i</sup> We are one loaf, one body, consisting of members as countless as the grains of corn combined in bread, as closely compacted together as they are in the loaf. This is indeed a lively and impressive figure, bringing strongly home to us the union which ought to exist among Christians. They are

<sup>h</sup> Romans, xii. 15.

<sup>i</sup> "Ὅτι εἰς ἕρως, ἐν σώμα, οἱ πολλοί ἐσμεν.

by profession united in love. Love is the great principle, which, pervading the hearts of all true Christians, disposes them to feel associated with each other in one indissoluble bond. This heavenly grace moves their heart to sympathise with one another, to feel each other's joys and sorrows as their own. Beautiful is that specimen of the sympathy existing among the primitive Christians, mentioned by St. Paul in the case of Epaphroditus, "For he longed after you all, and was full of heaviness, because that ye had heard that he had been sick."<sup>k</sup> He knew that they would be painfully grieved by his sickness, and he was depressed with sorrow by consideration of the affliction which they were enduring for his sake. Such was their mutual sympathy, their heartfelt distress, at the thought of each other's affliction, though living at a great distance apart, and in no way related except in the bonds of Christian love. And thus ought all Christians to feel for one another. If the Great Head of the Church, God the Son, "the brightness of His Father's glory and the express image of His person,"<sup>l</sup> sitting on the right hand of the Majesty on high, can regard that which is done to one of the least of those whom He graciously condescends to call His brethren as done to Himself, surely we should not feel indifferent to the circumstances even of the lowest of our neighbours, as if they did not pertain to us. Our depraved nature tends to this. "All seek their own, not the things that are Jesus Christ's."<sup>m</sup> The figure

<sup>k</sup> Philippians, ii. 26.<sup>l</sup> Hebrews, i. 3.<sup>m</sup> Philippians, ii. 21.

before us is a strong corrective of it. It is a lively representation of the intimate association of Christians with each other, "For as the body is one, and hath many members, and all the members of that one body, being many, are one body: so also is Christ."<sup>n</sup> And what is the object of this intimate union being so strongly urged upon us? "That there should be no schism in the body; but that the members should have the same care one for another. And whether one member suffer, all the members suffer with it; or one member be honoured, all the members rejoice with it. Now ye are the body of Christ, and members in particular."<sup>o</sup> The inspired Apostle through whom the Holy Ghost spake these words to us, was himself an eminent pattern of the sympathy which he was here directed to enjoin. "Who is weak," says he, "and I am not weak? who is offended, and I burn not?"<sup>p</sup>

The wine in the Eucharist may convey an additional illustration of Christian union. The vine-press causes many grapes to contribute their juice to one body of wine. Here we seem to have a more lively figure than in the bread of the flow of generous feeling through the members of Christ, blending them together in one harmonious body. And it may serve to remind us, that it is by cultivating a spirit of love toward each other, that we shall be really and practically maintaining and cherishing true Christian union. It may call our attention to the importance of such love flowing freely and

<sup>n</sup> 1 Corinthians, xii. 12.

<sup>o</sup> 1 Corinthians, xii. 25—27.

<sup>p</sup> 2 Corinthians, xi. 29.

abundantly in the soul. It may illustrate its effect upon our life. For as wine invigorates the body for energy and diligence in the performance of its active duties, so does a full current of love in the soul strengthen and animate it for zealous and energetic exertion in benevolent and noble efforts for the promotion of the spiritual and temporal welfare of mankind. We see here then a lively and interesting illustration of the important truth, that much more than the dry performance of acts of duty is required of us; that a generous spirit of love in the heart is necessary to render our good works acceptable to God. Destitute of love, language and conduct ever so good in themselves reflect no spiritual benefit upon the agent. "Though I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, and have not charity, I am become as sounding brass, or a tinkling cymbal. And though I have the gift of prophecy, and understand all mysteries, and all knowledge; and though I have all faith, so that I could remove mountains, and have not charity, I am nothing. And though I bestow all my goods to feed the poor, and though I give my body to be burned, and have not charity, it profiteth me nothing."<sup>q</sup> "The Lord seeth not as man seeth; for man looketh on the outward appearance, but the Lord looketh on the heart."<sup>r</sup> He observes whether the blessed spirit of love flows there, while the tongue utters the language of kindness and the hand performs generous deeds. Empty fashion or hypocritical pretence may dictate kind language. Vain

<sup>q</sup> 1 Corinthians, xiii. 1—3.<sup>r</sup> 1 Samuel, xvi. 7.

ostentation or fear of reproach, or a cold calculation of duty may give rise to benevolent actions. But He that "trieth the hearts and reins,"<sup>s</sup> will take no pleasure in these. "God is love."<sup>t</sup> And as He finds infinite happiness in Himself, so does He delight in contemplating His own image in His creatures. He takes pleasure in seeing the heart of man flowing with love. What an honour to contribute to the pleasure of the Almighty! Beloved in the Lord, should He see one harmonising spirit of love flowing through our hearts, while we are commemorating the love of His dear Son, we should enjoy this sublime, this exalted honour. "Beloved, let us love one another: for love is of God; and every one that loveth is born of God, and knoweth God. He that loveth not knoweth not God; for God is love."<sup>v</sup>

Commemorating the love of His dear Son! Here is after all the most abundant source of love in the heart in the celebration of the Holy Communion, the inward grace co-operating with it. It is so in many ways. The Apostle assigns as a ground for our union as one bread, one body, "*for we are all partakers of that one bread.*" The important consideration that we are all coming to the same Saviour for salvation is a strong and efficacious bond of love. It reminds us, that we are all naturally guilty and depraved; that "in us, that is in our flesh dwelleth no good thing;"<sup>w</sup> that "we

<sup>s</sup> Psalms, vii. 9.

<sup>v</sup> 1 John, iv. 7.

<sup>t</sup> 1 John, iv. 16.

<sup>w</sup> Romans, vii. 18.

have nothing that we have not received,"<sup>x</sup> that "by the grace of God we are what we are."<sup>y</sup> It banishes from our heart therefore that great source of all separative feelings and selfish isolation, *pride*. We cannot regard others as unworthy of brotherly union with us, when we feel ourselves in the same condemnation with them. It sets before us our fellow-christians looking in the same direction with ourselves for salvation. They are together with us obeying the gracious command, "Look unto me, and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth."<sup>z</sup> Having together with us received a deadly wound from the serpent, they are together with us looking upon the antitype of the brazen serpent on the cross for healing and life. They are together with us looking on Him for salvation, whom together with us they pierced with their sins. And "through Him we all have access by one Spirit unto the Father;"<sup>a</sup> "By whom also we have access by faith into this grace wherein we stand, and rejoice in hope of the glory of God."<sup>b</sup> We come together as members of Christ, all united with Him in bonds of mysterious union. We come as already all temples of the Holy Ghost seeking a new influx of the Spirit in the Holy Sacrament, of which we are together engaged in partaking. Thus we hope that One Spirit is pervading all our souls, preparing us for one and the same paradise of felicity in heaven. Thus we are all associated together upon the same deeply interesting and affecting grounds.

<sup>x</sup> 1 Corinthians, iv. 7.<sup>y</sup> 1 Corinthians, xv. 10.<sup>z</sup> Isaiah, lxxv. 22.<sup>a</sup> Ephesians, ii. 18.<sup>b</sup> Romans, v. 2.

Such considerations the Apostle proposes as adequate reasons for “forbearing one another in love ; endeavouring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. There is one body, and one Spirit, even as ye are called in one hope of your calling ; One Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in you all.”<sup>c</sup> All trusting in the same Saviour, in Him adopted as children of the same Father, endowed with the blessed influence of the same Spirit, and looking to the same inheritance, and thus hoping to meet and be united in one bond of peace and love in heaven, we should divest ourselves of all feelings of variance and dislike, and cherish a spirit of harmony and charity on earth.

And to these grounds may be added one of the most intense interest, of the most vital and deeply affecting importance. It is the most gracious will, it is the most urgent desire of our blessed Lord and Saviour, of Him to whom we are indebted for all our salvation, that it should be so. How earnest His longing is for this holy love and peace among His disciples we may infer from His frequent injunctions on this subject, from the prominence which He gave to love among the commandments of God, from His making it the very seal, the distinguishing stamp upon His disciples. “By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another ;”<sup>d</sup> and above all from the penetrating language of that prayer which issued from the fulness of self-devoting love in the very hour

<sup>c</sup> Ephesians, iv. 2—6.

<sup>d</sup> St. John, xiii. 35.

wherein He gave Himself for us. "Neither pray I for these alone, but for them also which shall believe on me through their word; that they all may be one; as Thou, Father, art in me, and I in Thee, that they also may be one in us: that the world may believe that Thou hast sent me."<sup>e</sup> Can we see such ardent desire in our blessed Redeemer without feeling forward and eager to fulfil it.

We may add again to our reasons for cultivating a spirit of unity in the celebration of the Lord's Supper, one which is impressed upon us with an overwhelming weight of obligation. We should thereby glorify the Lord. We should manifest His divine wisdom and goodness in devising and ordaining a ceremony which could have such excellent effect upon men, which could so powerfully subdue their hostile feelings, dissipate their uncharitable affections, and shed so engaging a spirit of sympathy and benevolence among them.

Beautiful is even one congregation of communicants, commemorating their Saviour's love, and exhibiting the image of it in their own tender charity to each other! What then would be the beauty of the whole catholic Church, spread over the world, in that sweet harmony celebrating the redeeming love of Christ. A beautiful and glorious union would indeed pervade the universal Church, if while every separate congregation celebrated the holy communion in such spirit of brotherly kindness, each could cast an eye of charity over the whole Church, contemplating with delight all con-

<sup>e</sup> St. John, xvii. 20, 21.

gregations of the saints in the same spirit of love, professing their faith in the same Saviour, devoting themselves to the service of the same Lord, receiving the same precious sustenance for their souls in His most blessed Body and Blood, looking forward with the same hope to the enjoyment of the anti-type of this sacred feast, in the everlasting banquet of love wherein He hopes to rejoice with them in triumphant delight for ever.

Greatly, indeed, would it redound to the glory of the Lord, that such effect of His Ordinance should be seen upon earth. How eminently would His wisdom and love shine in the institution of it. For these we should equally glorify Him when we see what ought to be its results. The failure arises only from the defects of those in whom this united love should appear. But every Christian should strive to do his part in producing this blessed manifestation of peace and love to the glory of his Lord and Saviour. To this end we should be careful to use to the purpose intended all the means of cultivating a spirit of love found in the holy Eucharist. It will not result mechanically from the celebration of it. We may take part in this Ordinance of love, and be as dissociated and disunited from one another, be as isolated and shut up in ourselves and indifferent to the interests of our neighbour, as if we never met in any such ceremony, or even in any one common place of worship.

Sad indeed is the comparison of the divisions and uncharitableness among Christians with the mutual love and heavenly peace which ought to prevail among them. There is something inex-

pressibly beautiful in the union of rational beings in love. The more widely such union is spread, the more sublime it appears. The unity, together with the immensity of the glorious body of angels and saints in heaven, under One Head, Christ the Son of God, both God and Man, stamps an ineffable grandeur upon the Kingdom of God, and most sublimely elevates and aggrandizes our idea of the felicity and glory of the redeemed. “Now therefore ye are no more strangers and foreigners, but fellow-citizens with the saints, and of the household of God; and are built upon the foundation of the Apostles and Prophets, Jesus Christ Himself being the chief corner stone; in whom all the building fitly framed together groweth unto an holy Temple in the Lord; in whom ye also are builded together for an habitation of God through the Spirit.”<sup>f</sup>

<sup>f</sup> Ephesians, ii. 19.

## LECTURE XVIII.

### COMFORT IN THE LORD'S SUPPER.

JOHN vi. 35.

*“ And Jesus said unto them, I am the bread of life: he that cometh to me shall never hunger; and he that believeth on me shall never thirst.”*

THE Church terms the holy Eucharist “the most comfortable Sacrament of the Body and Blood of Christ.”<sup>a</sup> The most soothing and satisfying comfort dwells in our blessed religion. It is found of them that seek it with their whole heart, in her various exercises, duties, and ordinances in manner and measure corresponding to their respective nature. In the most sublime manner, the most expansive and abundant measure, it is enjoyed in partaking of that sacred, that blessed Feast, the Lord's Supper.

To those who are inexperienced in religion it is difficult to impart any idea of the sweet and lovely

<sup>a</sup> Communion Service.

comfort to be found in it in any of its sacred branches. Every thinking man must indeed be brought to see that it would be better for him to follow the blessed paths of religion than the wretched ways of sin, because the former tend to glory, the latter lead down into hell. But too many unhappily are induced to forfeit that eternal glory, and encounter the tremendous torments of the dreadful hell, rather than deny themselves what appears to them to be the enjoyment of the present life. So they "live after the flesh and die."<sup>b</sup> They let their carnal nature take its course. They "fulfil the desires of the flesh and of the mind."<sup>c</sup> They take the course of the "children of wrath," and must consequently share their dreadful end. "Whose end is destruction, whose God is their belly, and whose glory is in their shame, who mind earthly things."<sup>d</sup>

But the Apostle boldly asks, "What fruit had ye *then* in those things whereof ye are now ashamed?" and adds, "For the end of those things is death."<sup>e</sup> He well knew that not only death, eternal death, an everlasting deadly state of intolerable anguish of body and soul, is the consequence of the ways of vice and ungodliness, but also that in their progress they yield no satisfaction, no peace, no happiness. Clashing passions, ever craving appetites, vile affections, perverse dispositions, wrath, lust, enmity, covetousness, ambition, with the rest of the shameful train of the works of the flesh, instead

<sup>b</sup> Romans, viii. 13.

<sup>d</sup> Philippians, iii. 19.

<sup>c</sup> Ephesians, ii. 3.

<sup>e</sup> Romans, vi. 21

of producing comfort, preclude the possibility of comfort by making the wretched harbourers of them feel that God is against them, and generate only disquiet and shame, and a "certain fearful looking for of judgment and fiery indignation, which shall devour the adversaries."<sup>f</sup>

"To be carnally minded is death; but to be spiritually minded is life and peace."<sup>g</sup> "In the way of righteousness is life; and in the pathway thereof there is no death."<sup>h</sup> In the true evangelical spirit of mind, and in the course of life which it dictates, believe it, Christians, believe it, lies all true satisfaction, all real comfort, all pure joy, even in the present life. They who have "tasted that the Lord is gracious,"<sup>i</sup> who have been favoured with even the least glimpse of "the beauty of the Lord,"<sup>k</sup> who have experienced any portion of the delightful "comfort" which is found "in love;"<sup>l</sup> the soothing sweetness of Christian affection toward God and toward each other; of the peaceful and cheering consolations of prayer; of the sublime enjoyment of the study of God's Word; and, above all, who have been enabled to see even the golden fringes of the glory investing the mercy seat in the holy Communion; they whose eyes God has opened to a sight of even the most extreme points of the rays of "the Sun of righteousness," and whose heart He has touched, and disposed to any affection for things spiritual and heavenly, well know that all comfort lies in religion,

<sup>f</sup> Hebrews, x. 27.

<sup>h</sup> Proverbs, xii. 28.

<sup>k</sup> Psalms, xxvii. 4.

<sup>g</sup> Romans, viii. 6.

<sup>i</sup> 1 Peter, ii. 3.

<sup>l</sup> Philippians, ii. 1.

that the highest happiness is to be found in God, in Christ, in things pertaining to His kingdom and glory.

And indeed all, who would thoughtfully, calmly, and dispassionately contemplate their being, with the blessed religion, which the Holy Scriptures offer them, could not but come to the same conclusion. A really healthful study of moral philosophy and metaphysics would guide the student into the same haven. We cannot prosecute the study of the works even of heathen philosophers without recognising misery and degradation, and confusion of being as the wretched results of iniquity and vice; without learning that in righteousness and the employment of the lofty endowments of the soul in the direction and in the manner purposed by our great Creator, exists the most noble, the most exalted, the most delightful enjoyment of which human nature is capable. In the writings of those great but unenlightened men we find the elements of such views, as they were not favoured with the means of carrying out. Revelation enables us both to correct them and to apply them in ways hidden from themselves.

Man craves the satisfaction of his being. He craves relief from evil. He craves the enjoyment of good. In various ways the blessed religion of the Gospel meets his longings, and ultimately fully and abundantly satisfies them. But we must confine ourselves at present to the manner in which the Holy Sacrament of the Lord's Supper tends to this end, which so richly entitles it to the designation of the "most comfortable Sacrament."

“Jesus said unto them, I am the bread of life: he that cometh to me shall never hunger; and he that believeth on me shall never thirst.”<sup>m</sup> All the longings of his soul shall be satisfied. Its anxious fears shall be laid to rest in calm repose. Its wants shall be amply and abundantly supplied. Its intellectual faculties shall find corresponding objects fully sufficient for their entire and everlasting employment. Its affections shall meet with their correlatives in such measure as to afford scope for the boundless and most delightful exercise of them. His whole being shall be satisfied, eternally satisfied. His cup shall run over. His soul shall be filled, shall overflow, with everlasting peace and joy. Here are vast and inestimable promises. All who believe them in such measure as to be really and practically influenced by them will experience their full and most abundant accomplishment. “For all the promises of God in Him are yea, and in Him Amen, unto the glory of God by us.”<sup>n</sup>

In Christ is found all that the soul can desire. “And ye are complete in Him.”<sup>o</sup> The original language here is very forcible and impressive. The soul desiderates pardon, relief from the anxious anticipation of condemnation to torment and misery eternal, the dreadful forebodings of a restless conscience. It longs to be reconciled to God, to find Him in whose hands are its eternal interests, and whom it has grievously offended, pacified toward it, turning His wrath away, and regarding it with

<sup>m</sup> St. John, vi. 35.

<sup>n</sup> 2 Corinthians, i. 20.

<sup>o</sup> Colossians, ii. 10 : καὶ ἔστε ἐν αὐτῷ πεπληρωμένοι.

the favour which He bears to His people. Possessed of fine intellectual powers capable of expansion to boundless extent, it employs them upon various objects, but finds none fully occupying them till they are engaged upon Christ. In the contemplation of God through Him, of all "the mystery of godliness" manifested in Him, of all the wondrous system of the Gospel, of the sublime beauties of the divine law, of that glorious spiritual temple the Church, of all things connected with the Kingdom of God, it finds abundant, overwhelming matter for the exercise of its theoretic powers, however infinitely expanded and advanced. In Christ, God and Man, it finds such perfect beauty, beauty of holiness, such righteousness blended with love, such mercy harmonising with justice, such condescension, compassion, long-suffering, kindness, love; it recognises the source of most inestimable and unspeakable benefits as challenge all its best affections and make it content to rest them upon Him for ever. And it discovers that it may do this and yet exercise the same affections on fellow-creatures, and exults in finding in the kingdom of Christ such vast scope for the fulfilment of that delightful commandment, "That he who loveth God loveth his brother also."<sup>p</sup>

Thus does the soul see fulness in Christ. "He that descended is the same also that ascended, that He might fill all things."<sup>q</sup> His divine Father "gave Him to be the Head over all things to the Church, which is His body, the fulness of Him that filleth

<sup>p</sup> 1 John, iv. 21.

<sup>q</sup> Ephesians, iv. 10.

all in all.”<sup>r</sup> There is in Christ that which amply meets every want of the soul, relieves it from all evil, supplies it with all good.

But we may stand before this picture of blessedness, and long to see it realised in ourselves, yet hardly venture to hope that we can attain that contrite and believing spirit to which the pardon is promised, can become so spiritually minded as to enjoy the contemplation of God, can so purify our affections, that they should find their resting place upon beings holy and good. And well indeed might we shrink in utter desperation from the hope of attaining such a state of rest by mere exertions of our own. But what was the promise of Christ to those who would “love Him and keep His commandments?” “I will pray the Father and He shall give you another Comforter, that He may abide with you for ever; even the Spirit of truth.”<sup>s</sup> This great promise He began to fulfil upon His ascension into heaven. “Therefore being by the right hand of God exalted, and having received of the Father the promise of the Holy Ghost, He hath shed forth this, which ye now see and hear.”<sup>t</sup> When “He ascended on high, He led captivity captive, and received gifts for men.”<sup>v</sup> And He has graciously engaged that the great gift of the Spirit of God shall be given to all that pray for it. “How much more shall your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to them that ask Him?”<sup>w</sup> By

<sup>r</sup> Ephesians, i. 22, 23.

<sup>s</sup> St. John, xiv. 15—17.

<sup>t</sup> Acts, ii. 33.

<sup>v</sup> Psalms, lxviii. 13.

<sup>w</sup> St. Luke, xi. 13.

the power of the Holy Ghost, then, what attainments may we not be enabled to reach! He can so dispose our hearts, so invigorate our faculties and sanctify our affections, as to render them capable of enjoying the fulness of Christ.

“It pleased the Father that in Him should all fulness dwell.”<sup>x</sup> He is all things to the soul, the supply of all its needs, the correlative of all its faculties and affections. And in the holy Sacrament of the Lord's Supper, He is imparted to every one who partakes of it with a true and lively faith. “The cup of blessing which we bless, is it not the communion of the blood of Christ? The bread which we break, is it not the communion of the body of Christ?”<sup>y</sup>

Justly, then, does the Church designate the holy Eucharist as “the most comfortable Sacrament of the Body and Blood of Christ.” The devout communicant finds in that great Ordinance, every craving and longing desire of his soul fully and amply met. This is satisfaction. This is comfort. He kneels before the table of his Saviour and his Lord, overwhelmed with the deepest and most humiliating sense of his guilt, of his depravity, of his baseness, of his fallen and degraded state, with lively apprehension of “the wrath to come,” of “the terror of the Lord” in the dreadful day of judgment, and in the tremendous effects of His righteous sentence upon the wicked in that day, eternal anguish, and torment in awful darkness and flames of fire. But he is commemorating the most precious death

<sup>x</sup> Colossians, i. 19.

<sup>y</sup> 1 Corinthians, x. 16.

of Christ. He is looking upon the blessed Son of God in the human nature enduring the bitter pains of crucifixion. He sees His most precious blood flowing from His wounded body. He believes that here is the great atonement for his sins. He regards the sufferings which he contemplates as endured in his behalf, as standing in the place of the eternal punishment due to him for his sins. He looks up and sees his injured God accepting the offering made by His blessed Son on the cross, as the full satisfaction of His justice, and thence turning His wrath away and regarding him with a reconciled and gracious countenance. This speaks peace to his soul. This calms his anxious fears. This sheds a feeling of soothing comfort over his heart. As he partakes of the consecrated bread and wine, he is earnestly considering his own state, devoutly contemplating his Saviour, aggravating his apprehension of his sins, and magnifying his Redeemer's merits, to the increase of his humiliation and the strengthening of his faith. He considers that he is receiving Christ into his soul, the great remedy for all its evils, being "of God made to it wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption."<sup>z</sup>

His soul is thus carried forward from the consolatory assurance of pardon to the contemplation of every thing in his once crucified and now ascended and glorified Saviour requisite to make him "meet to be a partaker of the inheritance of the saints in light."<sup>a</sup> His thoughts ascend to heaven,

<sup>z</sup> 1 Corinthians, i. 30.

<sup>a</sup> Colossians, i. 12.

and dwell upon the Son of man in His body of light and glory, with "His eyes as a flame of fire,"<sup>a</sup> and "His countenance as the sun shineth in His strength,"<sup>b</sup> "fairer than the children of men, with grace poured into His lips," with "glory and majesty," with "truth, meekness, and righteousness,"<sup>c</sup> "Whose throne is for ever and ever."<sup>d</sup> Here is indeed ample occupation for all the faculties of his soul. With divinity to satisfy it, it can never hunger or thirst. With serene contentment and grateful joy, he says "Thou art my portion, O Lord," and a deep feeling fills his heart, impressing him with a satisfying assurance that if he can but possess this portion he can never need anything more. Boundless scope for the employment of all the powers of his soul is here opened to him. Its great Author can alone fill it. Divine majesty, and glory, and wisdom, and power, and righteousness, and love, with all the infinitely grand works of the Lord, and the wondrous ways of His providence and government, are amply adequate to the full and entire occupation of the most advanced and extended faculties of the most exalted Spirit in the creation of God. Nor is it provision for the employment of his intellectual powers alone, which the enlightened communicant finds set before him in the Lord's Supper, but also for his highest and best and most enjoyable affections. Admiration, reverence, adoration, gratitude, devotedness, zeal, joy, love, find unbounded scope in God our Saviour

<sup>a</sup> Revelations, i. 14.

<sup>c</sup> Psalm, xlv. 2—4.

<sup>b</sup> Revelation, i. 16.

<sup>d</sup> Psalm, xlv. 6.

on the throne of His glory. He joyfully throws himself into devoted acquiescence in the Apostle's injunction, "If ye be risen with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God. Set your affection on things above, not on things on the earth."<sup>e</sup> The Christian soul delights to love. It "dwells in love."<sup>f</sup> It rejoices then in having before it objects altogether lovely, pure, holy, perfect, with no intermixture of qualities which it cannot but abominate, so that, there being nothing to check the flow of love, it may freely and abundantly expatiate in them to its perfect satisfaction, and its most exquisite joy.

And if the sincere but imperfect communicant experiences in the celebration of the Eucharist, not more than a glimpse of the possibilities of such spiritual enjoyment, he feels himself cheered, encouraged, and comforted by considering that he is now receiving the means of obtaining those true joys on which his heart is fixed. He is receiving Christ with all that Christ imparts to the soul, not only pardon, but also grace, "grace which shall be sufficient for him," sufficient to empower him to master his corrupt nature, to overcome the world, to obtain faith, and love, and courage, and zeal, and the spirit of prayer, and every other requisite for the enjoyment of God, and of His heavenly kingdom.

That must indeed be a "most comfortable sacrament," which is furnished with such abundant

<sup>e</sup> Colossians, iii. 1, 2.

<sup>f</sup> 1 John, iv. 16.

sources of consolation and hope, with the blessed assurance of pardon of the past, and of the means of prosecuting the work of sanctification for the future, which sets heavenly objects before the soul, and puts it in the way of preparing for the enjoyment of them.

Nor let the comfort derivable from the holy Communion be supposed to be circumscribed within the bounds, widely comprehensive as they are, of the particular points just mentioned. Since partaking of this Communion is partaking of Christ, every branch of "the consolation in Christ"<sup>g</sup> may be here found.

Here we find the soothing and satisfying comfort of feeling ourselves in covenant with God. In this holy sacrament we renew the evangelical covenant, we affix our seal to it afresh, we believe that God again ratifies it. The world being at enmity with God, and the consequences of being enemies of God being so tremendous, the feeling of being in covenant with Him is most sweet and most comfortable. "The peace of God passeth all understanding."<sup>h</sup> God set His bow in the cloud, and said, "I do set my bow in the cloud, and it shall be for a token of a covenant between me and the earth. And it shall come to pass, when I bring a cloud over the earth, that the bow shall be seen in the cloud: and I will remember my covenant, which is between Me and you and every living creature of all flesh."<sup>i</sup> So has he instituted through His blessed Son a

<sup>g</sup> Philippians, ii. 1.

<sup>h</sup> Philippians, iv. 7.

<sup>i</sup> Genesis, ix. 13—15.

sacred ordinance which is a memento of the everlasting covenant, which insures eternal peace between God and man, even the covenant of the Gospel, that "new and better covenant," abounding with promises of all that the soul of man needs for its salvation. He has given Christ "for a covenant of the people."<sup>k</sup> And Christ appointed the holy Eucharist to be a perpetual memorial of Himself, the blessed "Messenger of the covenant, in whom we delight."<sup>l</sup> So remembering Him in this sacrament, we remember the holy covenant and devote ourselves anew to observe its terms. And the all-seeing God observes us, and cannot fall short of us in readiness to fulfil His own covenant, which He Himself in infinite mercy devised and made with us, sealing it with the most precious blood of His dear Son. What inestimable blessings and privileges are comprised in this covenant of mercy. Contemplating these, and considering that they are all newly assured to us in the celebration of the Lord's Supper, we may well feel our hearts soothed with the most serene and satisfying comfort. "Now the God of peace, that brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus, that great Shepherd of the sheep, through the blood of the everlasting covenant, make you perfect in every good work to do His will, working in you that which is well pleasing in His sight, through Jesus Christ; to whom be glory for ever and ever. Amen."<sup>m</sup>

Here we find union with Christ, that wonderful

<sup>k</sup> Isaiah, xlii. 6.

<sup>l</sup> Malachi, iii. 1.

Hebrews, xiii. 20, 21.

union, so exalted and mysterious in its nature, so infinitely abounding in the sublime and glorious blessings which it comprehends, so essentially important to the pursuit of practical holiness in our life. What can surpass its exalted nature, or the value of the benefits which it comprises? Do we not hear our blessed Saviour praying "That they all may be one ; as Thou, Father, art in Me, and I in Thee, that they also may be one in Us."<sup>n</sup> What can surpass this? Is it not in our union with Christ that we have all the blessings of the Gospel made sure to us? "He hath made us accepted in the beloved; in Whom we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of His grace; wherein He hath abounded toward us in all wisdom and prudence."<sup>o</sup> Has not Christ Himself warned us that upon our union with Him depends all our power to bring forth the fruits of holiness. "Abide in me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, except it abide in the vine; no more can ye, except ye abide in Me."<sup>p</sup> And what blessed assurance has He given to us that if we do maintain our union with Him, God will hear our prayers for the gift of His Holy Spirit, and enable us to produce such fruit as will invest us with the high honour of bringing glory to God. "If ye abide in Me, and My words abide in you, ye shall ask what ye will, and it shall be done unto you. Herein is my Father glorified, that ye bear much fruit; so shall

<sup>n</sup> St. John, xvii. 21.<sup>o</sup> Ephesians, i. 6—8<sup>p</sup> St. John, xv. 4.

ye be my disciples.”<sup>q</sup> Here is an immense sphere of comfort opened to us in the wide expanse of the vast range of high and heavenly blessings granted to us, in the power of attaining true holiness and abounding in good works, to the glory of God, through union with Christ. And Christ says, “He that eateth My flesh, and drinketh My blood, dwelleth in Me, and I in him.”<sup>r</sup> “As ye have therefore received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk ye in Him: rooted and built up in Him, and stablished in the faith, as ye have been taught, abounding therein with thanksgiving.”<sup>s</sup>

Here we find the means of attaining resurrection to eternal life. “Whoso eateth My flesh, and drinketh My blood, hath eternal life; and I will raise Him up at the last day.”<sup>t</sup> Connected with a really devout participation of the Lord's Supper is the hope of enjoying everlasting life, with all its angelic glory, joy, and peace. Here then comfort appears again in unfathomable depth.

Here we feel ourselves in the midst of the great Communion of Saints, associated with all the host of heaven, with the Lord at the head of them. Here our soul may dwell with comfort, hope, and joy, on the whole sphere of ineffable blessings, found in that grand communion.

The Church, then, speaks no empty and unmeaning words in terming the holy Eucharist a “most comfortable Sacrament.” But by whom are its comforts found? This is too comprehensive a

<sup>q</sup> St. John, xv. 7, 8.

<sup>s</sup> Colossians, ii. 6, 7.

<sup>r</sup> St. John, vi. 56.

<sup>t</sup> St. John, vi. 54.

question to be answered in detail on the present occasion. Such answer must be left for a subsequent Lecture. They who have faith, true Christian faith, may be regarded as a full though summary reply to it. Faith, pure, genuine, unwavering faith, the blessed source of general consolation and peace, brings home to the soul the peculiar comforts of the Lord's Supper. Such faith implies contrite penitence and perfect humiliation of ourselves. We cannot find comfort through faith in Christ till we have been entirely divested of all confidence in ourselves. Our humiliation must be complete before our faith can be perfect. We must "lothe ourselves in our own sight for our iniquities and for our abominations."<sup>v</sup> We "must be ashamed and confounded for our own ways."<sup>w</sup> We must be heavily oppressed with the shame and fear of true repentance ere we can experience the comfort of a resting place in Christ through faith in Him. And our faith must be perfect, comprising entire confidence in the meritorious efficacy of the great atonement of the Cross, for the pardon of our sins, in the intercession, in the power and love of Christ, in the mercy and promises of God, in the all-sufficient aid of the Holy Spirit. Such faith implies again complete devotedness to God. No one can feel confident that God's mercy is over him pardoning his sins, or ever venture to entertain the least hope of being at peace with God, while he continues wilfully in any habitual sin or neglect of duty; while he feels

<sup>v</sup> Ezekiel, xxxvi. 31.<sup>w</sup> Ezekiel, xxxvi. 32.

that he is not serving God; that he is living unto himself, and not to the Lord.

Here is the great secret of comfort, as in our general Christian course, so especially in the celebration of the holy Communion, perfect humiliation, perfect faith, perfect devotedness, the heart perfect with the Lord, relying on nothing but Him, entirely relying upon Him, completely devoted to His service in duty, gratitude, and love.

## LECTURE XIX.

THE LORD'S SUPPER A PREPARATION FOR DEATH.

ST. MATTHEW, xxvi. 29.

*“ But I say unto you, I will not drink henceforth of this fruit of the vine, until that day when I drink it new with you in my Father's kingdom.”*

A MINUTE critical exposition of this passage, together with a full examination of the various interpretations of it suggested by commentators, would occupy far more space than the capacity of this Lecture can admit. Let two expressions, then, only be considered as keys to the intent of our blessed Lord in these impressive and important words. These expressions are “I drink it new,” and “in my Father's kingdom.”\* The former of these

\* *Bibere vinum* ponitur pro convivari, per Synecdochen, et hoc pro frui cœlestibus et Spiritualibus gaudiis, quæ in S.S. cum vino comparantur.

Novum, i. e. vinum spirituale, lætitiâ immortalem, quæ per vinum adumbrata intelligebatur.

expressions appears to imply something analogous to the original sense of the word to which it is applied, but of a nature far more excellent and elevated. When we read of "a new song," "a new name," "the new Jerusalem," our mind is drawn up and expanded in the contemplation of something spiritual, exalted, and glorious. The latter expression, "in my Father's kingdom," attracts our thoughts rather to heaven itself, than to the Christian dispensation, or the Church of Christ upon earth. "Then shall the righteous shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their Father."<sup>a</sup> Following the clue thus afforded to us, we are led to the adoption of that exposition of Christ's language in the passage before us which represents Him as saying, I shall not for the future associate with you in earthly feasts. You may look forward to a far more glorious association with Me; a far more noble and elevated festival than can be found upon earth. "And I appoint unto you a kingdom, as my Father hath appointed unto Me, that ye may eat and drink at My table in My kingdom, and sit on thrones judging the twelve tribes of Israel."<sup>b</sup> Herein you may be blest with the unspeakable enjoyment of immediate communion with Me and with My Father in heaven itself, together with all the bright

Novum i. e. non vulgari, sed novo et singulari, modo, immortalis scilicet factus et in Regnum gloriamque Patris translatus. Novum i. e. aliud et longe diversum, multoque præstantius, admirabile, ob excellentiam: ut canticum novum; Psal. xxxiii. 3.; Apoc. v. 9.; Nomen Novum, Apoc. ii. 17. et iii. 12.—*Poli Synopsis in loc.*

<sup>a</sup> St. Matthew, xiii. 43.

<sup>b</sup> St. Luke, xxii. 29, 30.

myriads of the angelic host in an eternal banquet of love, joy, and peace.

From communion with the Lord and His Church upon earth the transition to the heavenly communion appears ready and natural. By the former the soul is trained, fashioned, and prepared for the latter. Wherefore the celebration of the holy Sacrament of the Lord's Supper is the most effectual means of adapting the soul to heaven, and thus ripening it for departing and being with Christ. There can be no such preparation for death, no such remedy for the fear of death, as repeated and frequent eucharistic communion. The manner in which this blessed Sacrament frames the soul for association with heavenly beings, plainly manifests that a comfortable and satisfactory preparation for death is not to be expected in a single instance of partaking of the sacramental bread and wine in the last hour. It does not act as a charm, or as a passport, or as a key unlocking the portals of heaven for the departing soul. It purifies and edifies it, carrying on a continuous course of improvement in it, maturing its views and affections, its tastes and habits, so as to frame it for the blessed and exalted sphere into which it is ushered at the crisis of death.

Here is the true preparation for death found in the celebration of the Lord's Supper.

It may be contemplated under a threefold aspect, *purification, edification, adaptation to heaven.*

Communion at the Lord's Table tends to purify the soul both from the guilt and from the corruption of sin. Many a Christian who would venture

to take part in other religious observances under a conviction of much sin cleaving to the dispositions of his heart and to the habits of his life, of many important and perhaps fatal deficiencies in his affections, or in the performance of his duties, would tremble at the thought of appearing at the Table of the Lord in such an unholy and defective state. The solemn injunction, "prepare to meet thy God,"<sup>b</sup> appears to sound in the voice of the minister of Christ announcing an approaching celebration of the holy Communion. And all dutiful hearts disposed to obey the Lord's command, "This do in remembrance of me,"<sup>c</sup> feel impressed with the awful nature of a summons into the divine presence. Thence arise careful self-examination, retrospective consideration of past life, confessions of sin, deep humiliation, earnest prayers for pardon, holy purposes of amendment, longing entreaties for the aid of the Holy Spirit in order to their accomplishment. Well might the Apostle rejoice in such penitential exercises in his Corinthian brethren. "For godly sorrow worketh repentance to salvation not to be repented of: but the sorrow of the world worketh death. For behold this selfsame thing, that ye sorrowed after a godly sort, what carefulness it wrought in you, yea, what clearing of yourselves, yea, what indignation, yea, what fear, yea, what vehement desire, yea, what zeal, yea, revenge."<sup>d</sup> And now when, in the frame of mind here represented, the contrite and devoted Chris-

<sup>b</sup> Amos, iv. 12.

<sup>c</sup> St. Luke, xxii. 19

<sup>d</sup> 2 Corinthians, vii. 10, 11.

tian approaches the holy table, casting his sins at the foot of the cross, seeking from his crucified Saviour both pardon for the past and grace for guidance, and strength for the time to come, we cannot but see in his communion the blessed means of the purification of his soul. He is "washed," he is "sanctified," he is "justified in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God."<sup>e</sup> His "sinful body is made clean by Christ's Body, and his soul washed through His most precious Blood."<sup>f</sup> The guilt of his sins is washed away by the application of the Blood of Christ to his soul, and he is enabled to "cleanse himself from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit,"<sup>g</sup> to "break off his sins by righteousness,"<sup>h</sup> through the power of the Spirit of God imparted to him in the Sacrament.

Moreover the Church enjoins, in addition to repentance and return to duty, restitution, reconciliation, and forgiveness in all cases of injury and variance, and reminds communicants that "it is requisite that no man should come to the Holy Communion but with a full trust in God's mercy, and with a quiet conscience."<sup>i</sup> And if peace of mind cannot be obtained without "further comfort or counsel," they are directed to resort to a minister of Christ for "the benefit of absolution, together with ghostly counsel and advice." These directions tend to secure communicants from attending the Lord's Table in such a state of soul as would pre-

<sup>e</sup> 1 Corinthians, vi. 11.

<sup>f</sup> Communion Service.

<sup>g</sup> 2 Corinthians, vii. 1.

<sup>h</sup> Daniel, iv. 27.

<sup>i</sup> Communion Service.

clude them from receiving the benefits of the Holy Sacrament. And if Christians, on every occasion of communicating, arrive, through the appointed means, at a well-grounded peace of mind, it is plain that at the approach of the awful hour of death their soul could not be in a state of perplexity and confusion, nor in the still worse state of blank and torpid insensibility respecting the eternal portion now immediately awaiting them. They have, previously to every access to their Lord and Saviour's Holy Table, searched their consciences, and "considered their ways," and examined the state of their soul, and called in question the principles on which they daily act. They have maintained peace with their neighbour, "as much as lay in them, living peaceably with all men,"<sup>k</sup> and seeking reconciliation in every instance with humble acknowledgment of error, and restitution when demanded by the claims of rectitude and justice. They have from time to time corrected and amended the habits of their life and reached more elevated stages of faithfulness in the discharge of their duties. Thus they have "kept themselves pure."<sup>l</sup> They have "walked with God."<sup>m</sup> They have "walked in the light," and "the blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanseth them from all sin."<sup>n</sup> They are relieved therefore from the desperate misery of seeing an Angel with a flaming sword turning every way against them, and keeping the way of the Paradise of God, with the tremendous denunciation, "No unclean person

<sup>k</sup> Romans, xii. 18.

<sup>l</sup> 1 Timothy, v. 22.

<sup>m</sup> Genesis, v. 24.

<sup>n</sup> 1 St. John, i. 7.

hath any inheritance in the Kingdom of Christ and of God,"<sup>o</sup> excluding from that glorious realm of purity and righteousness all who permit sin to pollute their heart and life. "If a man therefore purge himself from these, he shall be a vessel unto honour, sanctified, and meet for the Master's use, and prepared unto every good work."<sup>p</sup>

And "unto all good works" the holy Communion tends to render "the man of God thoroughly furnished."<sup>q</sup> Its results are not negative only, but also positive. It carries on not only the work of *purification* from sin, but also that of *edification* in holiness. It "edifies the soul in love,"<sup>r</sup> "love" which "is the fulfilling of the law."<sup>s</sup> Animating the soul with this fervent and earnest principle, it cherishes and invigorates in it a spirit of lively energy and ardent zeal. Love fosters in its genial atmosphere every heavenly grace. Love encourages the exercise of devotional duties by rendering them delightful to the soul. Love excites continual and diligent activity in good works, both because they please and glorify the highest object of love, and because they benefit fellow-creatures, who attract the sympathy of the benevolent heart. The practice of pious and charitable acts strengthens the graces whence they flow. The spirit of faithfulness, righteousness, and integrity is strengthened and invigorated in them in many ways. They dread, they watch against, they contend manfully with the contrary spirit. Successive Communions have both

<sup>o</sup> Ephesians, v. 5.

<sup>p</sup> 2 Timothy, ii. 21.

<sup>q</sup> 2 Timothy, iii. 17.

<sup>r</sup> Ephesians, iv. 16.

<sup>s</sup> Romans, xiii. 10.

caused them to feel most keenly the evil of such a spirit, and all the errors and defects of their conduct, which it has caused. They have also excited them to "lift up the hands which hang down, and the feeble knees; and make straight paths for their feet,"<sup>t</sup> to "gird up the loins of their mind,"<sup>v</sup> to "stand fast in the faith, to quit themselves like men, to be strong."<sup>w</sup> Thus "building up themselves on their most holy faith, praying in the Holy Ghost, they keep themselves in the love of God, looking for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ unto eternal life."<sup>x</sup> And the inward grace imparted to them in the holy Sacrament gives efficacy to all their spiritual exertions, their meditations and their resolutions, with every other exercise of soul, whereby they strive to make progress in righteousness and love. Thus they are "strengthened with might by His Spirit in the inner man." "Christ dwells in their hearts by faith." They are "rooted and grounded in love."<sup>y</sup> Their "faith groweth exceedingly, and the charity of every one of them all toward each other aboundeth."<sup>z</sup>

"Strong consolation," arising from "the hope set before them,"<sup>a</sup> cannot but issue from the observation of such progressive growth in grace. Where there is growth there must be life. Where there are the fruits of the Spirit, gradually ripening and advancing toward maturity, there must be the Spirit of God shedding His gracious influence

<sup>t</sup> Hebrews, xii. 12, 13.

<sup>w</sup> 1 Corinthians, xvi. 13.

<sup>y</sup> Ephesians, iii. 16, 17.

<sup>v</sup> 1 Peter, i. 13.

<sup>x</sup> Jude, 20, 21.

<sup>z</sup> 2 Thessalonians, i. 3.

<sup>a</sup> Hebrews, vi. 18.

through the heart. If the sap does not continue to pervade the branches of the tree, its incipient fruit will not swell and become soft, and sweet, and mellow. It will wither and dwindle away, and fall to the ground. It is true that the light of advancing knowledge of God, of Christ, of holiness, enables Christians to see more clearly their vast distance from the righteousness required of them, the poorness of their graces, the base and vile nature of their sins. And thus their very progress in holiness may tend for a time rather to depress than to elevate and encourage them. But hereby the inestimable grace of humility is fostered, which lies at the root of every other grace, instilling into it vigour, luxuriance, and increase. And at times it may please the Lord to shed a pleasant light over the soul of the lowly believer, enabling him to see his graces in their healthful, advancing, and promising state. Such gracious interposition may appear necessary for the refreshment and encouragement of the too much depressed and disheartened Christian. "It would be but little comfort to us," says Bishop Bull, "that the characters of God's Spirit are written upon our minds, if we ourselves do not arrive to the knowledge of them. Now this is the case of many Christians of great piety, but of weak understandings, they have the fruits of the Spirit flourishing in them, but take no satisfaction from thence, because they do not perceive and discern them. When, therefore, it is of use and expediency to them, that they should have a better knowledge of themselves, the Spirit of God is pleased to shine upon their understandings, and

raise and strengthen the faculties of their souls to an apprehensive and lively sense of those graces which He hath wrought in them, that they may receive comfort and satisfaction from them.”<sup>b</sup> And at what period is it more probable that such bright and cheering rays of divine light should be, by the tender compassion and lovingkindness of the Lord, shed over the soul, than at that crisis when consolation and encouragement are most needed, the time of immediate approach to the dark valley of the shadow of death. The blessed experience of many dying saints bears rich and abundant testimony to such special influence of the Holy Spirit, in the sweet peace, and cheering hope, and lively joy, pervading their soul amidst trying sufferings arising from deadly weakness, agony, and pain. And blessed, indeed, is that Christian who, in that awful hour is enabled, in his retrospective contemplation of his past life, to see that for many years “all carnal affections have been dying in him, and all things belonging to the Spirit have been living and growing in him.”<sup>c</sup> Blessed is he who can then see that he has been an honoured and highly favoured instrument in the hands of God in the promotion of His glory and pleasure, through the extension of the Kingdom of Christ, the “turning of many to righteousness” within the Church, or in any other way furthering the spiritual or the temporal interests of mankind. Happy, thrice happy, is the soul on the eve of its everlasting day of glory, whose blessed language is —“I am now ready to be offered, and the time of

<sup>b</sup> Sermon on “the testimony of the Spirit of God in the faithful.”

<sup>c</sup> Baptismal Service.

my departure is at hand. I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith : henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give me at that day : and not to me only, but unto all them also that love his appearing."<sup>d</sup>

*Adaptation to heaven* is the third aspect in which we are to contemplate the preparation for death experienced in the habitual celebration of the Lord's Supper. Joyful communion with the Lord and His Church tends to fashion the soul in a peculiar manner for its position in the mansions of glory.

It trains the soul for the enjoyment of spiritual happiness in heavenly communion.

A feast is one of the most common figures used in Holy Scripture to represent "the felicity of the chosen" of the Lord. "And in this mountain shall the Lord of hosts make unto all people, a feast of fat things, a feast of wines on the lees, of fat things full of marrow, of wines on the lees well refined."<sup>e</sup> "The kingdom of heaven is like unto a certain king, which made a marriage for his son."<sup>f</sup> "Tell them which are bidden, Behold I have prepared my dinner ; my oxen and my fatlings are killed, and all things are ready : come unto the marriage."<sup>g</sup> Men being used to find their mind at ease, and their spirits elevated, and their heart joyous in seasons of festivity, may, through the medium of their experience of an earthly banquet,

<sup>d</sup> 2 Timothy, iv. 6—8.

<sup>f</sup> St. Matthew, xxii. 2.

<sup>e</sup> Isaiah, xxv. 6.

<sup>g</sup> St. Matthew, xxii. 4.

form some, however low and inadequate, conception of the sweet serenity, the calm and lovely peace, the exalted triumph, the exquisite delight, which God has prepared in heaven for those blessed ones, whom He brings by His grace to faith and holiness upon earth. Yet has God given us ample assurance that the heavenly feast is spiritual, not gratifying carnal appetites, but delighting the soul with angelic joy. "For the kingdom of God is not meat and drink ; but righteousness, and peace, and joy in the holy Ghost."<sup>h</sup>

They who have "tasted that the Lord is gracious,"<sup>i</sup> that "in keeping His commandments there is great reward,"<sup>k</sup> that they are "sweeter than honey and the honey-comb,"<sup>l</sup> that His "loving-kindness is better than life,"<sup>m</sup> that "the peace of God passeth all understanding ;"<sup>n</sup> they who have been endowed with some enlightened apprehension of the glorious blessings and privileges to which God in "the riches of His grace," has called them through His beloved Son ; all those who have been favoured with the slightest glimpse of spiritual and heavenly things ; see enough in them to excite their interest, and animate their hope, and kindle their zeal, and awaken their exertions, and urge them to give their whole being, and devote their whole life to one course of earnest and anxious endeavour to accomplish the attainment of them.

But to impart the first dawn of light on these glorious subjects, to open to man an initiative con-

<sup>h</sup> Romans, xiv. 17.

<sup>k</sup> Psalm, xix. 11.

<sup>m</sup> Psalm, lxiii. 3.

<sup>i</sup> 1 Peter, ii. 3.

<sup>l</sup> Psalm, xix. 10.

<sup>n</sup> Philippians, iv. 7.

ception of the sweetness, the beauty, the sublimity, the grandeur of things spiritual and heavenly, and of the unspeakable happiness, the noble, elevating, transporting joy derived from them—here is a work surpassing the power of human wisdom, eloquence, or art. After all that can be said of “the beauty of holiness” and the “peace and joy in believing,” religion will appear dull, and insipid, and melancholy, to the carnal and unsanctified heart. But they who have such a heart are most likely to entertain high conceptions of the happy enjoyment of a feast. The promise of an eternal feast may be attractive to them. They may be induced to think thus, though we cannot see what pleasure is to be found in righteousness, what there can be in prayer and the study of the Scriptures soothing and pleasant to the heart, how the adoration of God can fill the soul with joy, yet, if the enjoyment of things spiritual may be justly termed a feast, we may well believe that happiness may be found in such things, though we cannot see how they are to produce it. And if the consummation of spiritual occupation in heaven affords infinite happiness, some foretaste of it may possibly be found in the practice of religious duties upon earth, and more especially in that most sacred duty which is peculiarly entitled to be termed a feast, the blessed Supper of the Lord.

Thus people who have feared religion, and shrunk from devoting themselves to it through an unfounded apprehension of its being a joyless and cheerless pursuit, may be allured to it. And should the grace of God induce them indeed to believe that

in the exercise of spiritual duties, particularly in the celebration of the holy Eucharist, the sweetest consolations and the highest felicity of which they are capable, are to be found even upon earth, they may be attracted to the performance of such duties, if they have previously neglected them, or, if they have prosecuted them heretofore in a dead, and formal, and heartless manner, may be excited henceforth so to prosecute them as to derive from them that peace and happiness, which the whole race of mankind seek, but which so few find the way to attain.

And indeed one step, and that no unimportant one, is gained, if men are induced to *seek* consolation and enjoyment in the practice of spiritual exercises. For then they will never feel satisfied in the mere formal observance of religious ceremonies, wherein they find no comfort. They will rather feel uneasy and uncomfortable, and alarmed, and deeply humbled in reviewing their state of mind in such duties, and be induced to consider what is wrong in the condition of their soul, or in the habits of their life, and earnestly set about seeking the needed amendment in both. And now, if they indefatigably seek peace and enjoyment in devotional duties, and above all, in the celebration of the Lord's Supper, and are ever striving to purify their hearts from vile tempers and passions, and all bad feelings and corrupt and inordinate desires, and to purge their life from all wicked habits both of word and deed, and supply all their defects in the execution of their duty toward God and man, they have found one of the most important keys to the

gate of the Kingdom of God. And they, who find the affections and dispositions of their hearts so ordered, their tone of mind so regulated, and their taste so directed, that their comfort and happiness are centred in religion, may cheer themselves with the delightful hope that their souls are in a course of preparation for the enjoyment of that great spiritual feast, "the Marriage Supper of the Lamb," the eternal banquet of righteousness, peace, and joy in the Kingdom of God.

Well may we "rejoice with joy unspeakable" when such hope shines before us. For blessed indeed are they who are called to the Marriage Supper of the Lamb. They are "the vessels of mercy, which He had afore prepared unto glory."<sup>o</sup> Their souls have undergone a course of preparation through the medium of these temporary spiritual feasts which the Lord has appointed upon earth. In the dutiful and pious use of these their souls have been trained to spiritual enjoyments. As they experienced increasing comfort and pleasure in them, and attained higher degrees of apprehension of the beautiful, the exalted, the exquisite, the divine nature of spiritual happiness, they thought less and less of the pleasures of the flesh, and of the world, and more completely and more strongly "set their affections on things above."<sup>p</sup> Thus they have been weaned from the world, and regard the hour of death as the blessed crisis wherein they will be relieved from all impediments to the full enjoyment of that happiness on which their heart has been set,

<sup>o</sup> Romans, ix. 23.

<sup>p</sup> Colossians, iii. 2.

and brought to the unalloyed felicity for which their taste has been fashioned, their affections adapted, their whole soul moulded and formed.

But while every religious duty, rightly performed, is to the truly Christian heart a feast, a source of peace and comfort, of renovating and invigorating refreshment, preparing the soul for the everlasting feast of spiritual joy in heaven, the holy Sacrament of the Lord's Supper is eminently so, concentrating in itself every privilege of our blessed religion tending to our consolation, peace, and joy. Here we see our holy Saviour suffering in His death the punishment due to our sins, and so relieving us from it. Here we see in consequence of His "enduring the sharpness of death, Heaven opened to all believers."<sup>1</sup> Here we partake of the most precious Body and Blood of our gracious Saviour, feeding on Him in our hearts with deep and earnest meditation upon His sufferings, His patience, His love, His power, His divine Majesty and glory. Here consequently our pardon is anew sealed and insured to us. Here fresh influences of the Holy Spirit are infused into our souls. Here we see the manifestation of God's love for us, see it appropriated to ourselves in the ministration of the pledges of His love. Here we find ourselves in the midst of the great communion, among the grand family of the children of God, in the mystical body of Christ, the associated saints of all ages and all countries, in connexion with angels and archangels, and above all, in "fellowship with the Father, and

<sup>1</sup> Te Deum.

with His Son Jesus Christ,” “Who is over all, God blessed for ever.”<sup>s</sup> Here we are brought near to that “presence” in which is “fulness of joy.”

This high and holy Feast, then, places us in a position the nearest possible on earth to that which we hope to hold in heaven. Those blessed Christians, therefore, who habitually and frequently partake of this sacred banquet, becoming ever more conformed to its requirements, and enabled in increasing measure to enjoy its blessedness, must be ever in a state of gradual and advancing preparation for Heaven. And if on the last occasion of eucharistic communion, the dying saint is blest with an enlightened view of all that this holy Sacrament is charged to bring before us, his soul would be all but in heaven, even before it winged its flight from the body, and upon being released from its fleshly prison would find itself transferred, to its ineffable delight, from the sacramental to the immediate and actual enjoyment of communion with the Lord and his heavenly Hosts.

<sup>r</sup> 1 John, i. 3.

<sup>s</sup> Romans, ix. 5.



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